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to do this special work under supervision. The apprentice class training serves as a general introduction to such record work.

The results of this clerical course thus far evident may be summarized as follows:

1. It has given a general knowledge of the library records, together with some information about the library as a whole, to a group of clerical assistants whose educational qualifications will hardly permit them to advance to the regular library service, but whose work is necessary to the library and should be recognized as a clerical grade of service. Such clerical positions are those of desk assistants at the main library and branches, typists in the catalog department, and certain assistants in the offices of the stations department, bindery department and the order department.

2. It is a test of the apprentice's usefulness to the library, since students who cannot pass this course have, as a rule, proved to be unfitted for even clerical positions. An exception to this are the foreign girls, who are valuable to the library because of their knowledge of a foreign language, but sometimes so handicapped by difficulty with English that it is necessary to take these technical courses a second time in order to pass them. In such cases the short course frequently serves as introductory to the full apprentice course, in which the technical courses are taken over again.

3. The short course, which usually begins in January, also serves as part of the full course in cases where apprentices come into the library after the beginning of the full course in October, thus enabling new apprentices to begin their training without waiting until the next year. In other cases, for different reasons, apprentices may be advised to begin with the short course and later on, after additional outside study and reading, complete the full course. Of the first class of eighteen, five have been taking the full course this year and three will complete it.

Whether the clerical course should be a longer and more comprehensive one is a question to be considered from the standpoint of both the student and the library. Would more subjects of study, which may not be related to the work which the apprentice is doing, be of value to her in her work? This problem is already apparent in the case of assistants in the catalog department to whom the loan work course is always more difficult and for whom special practice work at the loan desk has to be arranged. More attention might be given to training for speed and accuracy, but this should be in connection with the technical courses now included. On the side of the library, the number of apprentices who stay in the library only a short time after completing the course, raises the question as to whether the library would be justified in putting any more time and effort into the class. Out of the first class of eighteen, six have left. Students who are ambitious and promising are given the opportunity to take the longer course whenever they can be recommended for it.

A clerical course for assistants in a library might be called the junior high school grade of training for library work. Is there not a grade of library work for which such training is sufficient? If the clerical course is to be more than simply a preliminary to further training, a clerical grade of service must be developed, in which skill in record work shall be recognized by salaries which will hold clerical workers trained by the library in its own service, rather than preparing them for better positions in some business office.

THE TRAINING OF ASSISTANTS FOR LENDING DEPARTMENT WORK

By JOSEPHINE A. RATHBONE, *Vice-Director, School of Library Science, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, N. Y.*

When asked to speak on the circulation department from the point of view of the library school, I was more than glad to accede to the request, for though the school I represent has always emphasized and even exalted the work of the circulation department, I realized that I

had never really investigated just what preparation the students themselves found they had gotten from the school. I knew that the fiction seminar was planned to meet the needs of the desk assistant and the course in book selection is also planned partly to increase her book knowl-

edge, while the curriculum includes charging systems, of course, as well as 105 hours of carefully planned work in the circulation department.

But I confess I was surprised on asking a graduate of 1916 who has done circulation department work in two libraries what parts of the course she had found most helpful in her work, to have her say emphatically, "All of it, with the possible exception of technical French and German—there is no part of the course I haven't used." Pinning her down to details, she said the fiction seminar had been of the greatest help, next to classification, which latter enabled her to put her hand on things quickly or to direct a borrower to the exact spot where chess or forestry or calculus would be found, which, she said, always gave the borrowers confidence in a new assistant. Cataloging enabled her to show people how to use the catalog or to help them discover in it what they could not find for themselves. The course in book selection she had found very useful, as I had hoped, and to my surprise she added reference work because when people asked reference questions in the circulation department, as they often do, they were so pleased to be told that the answer would be found in a specific book. Charging systems she put last.

Another graduate who had been a circulation department assistant before taking the course and who is now the head of a large circulation department told me that the thing that had helped her most in the course was the fact that she had done practical work in *all* the departments at Pratt—reference, art reference, cataloging, etc.—and hence came to understand the relations of the several departments of a library. She said that she could not only guide borrowers more surely, but that she no longer expected the impossible of the other departments; or in other words that she could correlate the circulation department with the rest of the library.

Pursuing the matter further, I asked

the students in the present class who had come from and were returning to circulation department work what they felt they were taking back with them. All of them put the fiction seminar and reference lectures as first among the courses they were glad to have had and had felt the need of before. Current topics was specified more than once, also bibliography, publishers, and library visits, both the spring trips and the weekly visits.

So I begin to think that my first informant was right and that practically the whole course is a preparation for circulation department work and that conversely you cannot adequately train for circulation department work with less than a full library school course. This for many libraries may be at present a counsel of perfection, but I am sure all heads of circulation departments will agree with me.

Classroom instruction, however, is not by itself adequate preparation for satisfactory work in the circulation department. A student may do good work in the classroom, may classify intelligently, may make reports in fiction seminar that show fine literary appreciation and wide reading, may speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and yet may be a failure on the firing line. The circulation assistant needs, as you all know better than I, to have accuracy, dispatch and resourcefulness, and a pleasant way with her, but she must also be able to work under pressure, to keep her head and her temper under trying situations and in emergencies. She needs, in short, qualities that neither entrance or term examinations nor recitations in class can disclose either the presence or the absence of, and having these qualities (discoverable only by actual test) she needs more than a theoretical knowledge of the work before she can be an acceptable member of a staff.

These two desiderata—the testing out of the student and training her to the ready use of her knowledge and faculties

—can only be arrived at through carefully supervised work done under working conditions, and, as has been suggested before, she needs work not only in a circu-

lation department but in other departments of a library before she is qualified for a position of responsibility in a circulation department.

LABOR SAVING IN THE LENDING DEPARTMENT

By JESSIE SARGENT McNIECE, *Chief, Circulation Department, Public Library, St. Louis, Mo.*

Let us begin by differentiating sharply between legitimate short cuts and labor saving at the expense of our readers. Any practice—however convenient or efficient it may seem from the librarian's point of view—which tends to lessen the privileges or rights of the borrower, is reactionary and will in time work to the disadvantage of the library.

The St. Louis Public Library, with this distinction in mind, considered and investigated several plans for lessening or entirely abolishing certain features of circulation work, and for the present decided adversely in every instance. This being the case, there arose the question of how to meet tremendously increased work, our circulation being greater in March, 1919, than ever before in the history of the department, with a permanently weakened and constantly changing staff. The only practical answer seemed to be contained in the slogan of the efficiency expert, "install a system."

The first consideration was one of motion study. Ours is partially a closed shelf department, requests being presented at a long desk in the main hall and the books brought by the assistants from book stacks. A buzzer has been installed at this desk connected with the workroom in the rear and a code of signals established. An effort was made to keep all material which could possibly be requested within reach of the desk assistant. The Harvard classics, beloved of all seekers after culture of the canned variety, found a lodging on one end of this desk, and have never been allowed to stray from it, so great was the pleasure of the public and the relief of the assistant at having the entire set on tap, so to

speak, the only difficulty being raised by a few captious students who insist on reading the volumes in order.

Like every other library, our desk has been covered with posters urging all who approach it to "buy thrift stamps" or "make a scrapbook" and the backs of these posters have been utilized as bulletin boards, notes and instructions for the desk assistants being pasted on them.

In the workroom behind the desk, the telephone was moved from its table to the desk on which the trays of circulation stand, so that a telephone renewal might be looked up under the proper date, and indicated on the book card by the assistant slipping books without change of position. The arrangement of our circulation has always seemed to be a time-saver over the more complicated systems in use in some libraries. The book cards are filed under date in but two alphabets, for fourteen and seven-day books, arranged by author and accession numbers.

We are blessed (or cursed, according to the point of view) with a large music roll collection. Six rolls are issued on a card and the problem of handling them was serious since each roll must be charged as a separate book. Eventually they were treated as ephemera, without book cards and a record kept under the borrower's card number, of the number of rolls charged to him. These borrowers' cards are filed by date. The bottom of the box is used for a dating slip and the reader's card stamped in the usual manner with "6 m. r." penciled opposite the date.

All special catalogs and indices have been distributed through the stacks and shelved with the material which they index.